



Welcome to the February edition of the Charlottetown Amateur Radio Club Newsletter! We'll try to keep you up-to-date with what's happening this month and any future events we're planning or are aware of. This newsletter is automatically distributed to club members, prospective future students who have reached out to us in the last year, and other interested amateur operators in the region. If you do not wish to receive these monthly newsletters, let us know and we can remove you from our distribution list. Alternatively, if you are not included on the mailing list, but would like to receive a copy of our newsletter, please reach out to our secretary.

February Club Meeting - February 6th, Stratford Town Center

Can you believe it's already February?! And we haven't had a proper snow storm yet, but then they say that 2015 was a slow start too. Our next monthly meeting is coming up on Tuesday, February 6th, at 7:00 P.M. Everyone is welcome to attend. If you're a licensed radio operator and would like to become a member, or you're perhaps interested in becoming licensed and would like to find out more about us and the hobby, then please come and join us. We would love to meet you. For anyone who would like to become a member, membership dues are \$30 for 2024 for those who are not currently members of the Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC). For RAC members, it's \$20 for the year. Our students and graduates from the fall 2023 class are automatically members of the club. Our meetings run from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. (1900-2100) in the Southport room at the Stratford Town Center on Shakespeare Drive. Alongside monthly club reports we usually enjoy an information exchange. Over the last few months we've learned about alternate power options for radio operations, 3D printing, SDRs, HF antennas in the field, the April 2024 solar eclipse, and Parks on the Air Activations.

Spring 2024 Basic Licensing Course

We're hoping to be able to offer another basic licensing course this spring, most likely starting at the end of March or the beginning of April. We will update you as soon as we know more. In the meantime, if anyone would like to put their name down for the next course, then please reach out to Brent VY2HF or email us at the email address at the bottom of this newsletter.

NEAR-Fest makes a last-minute change in dates

NEAR-Fest organizer Mike Crestohl, W1RC, has announced that the dates for NEAR-Fest XXXV at the Deerfield (NH) Fairgrounds have had to change. Normally, NEAR-Fest runs from Friday morning to Saturday afternoon, once in April/May and once in October. The original Friday-Saturday dates were announced as April 26th and 27th, 2024 - but then a conflict with

the Deerfield Fairgrounds organizers was discovered, and NEAR-Fest lost access to late Friday and all day Saturday of that weekend. So, for April 2024 only, NEAR-Fest will run from Thursday morning April 25th to 3:00 P.M. Friday April 26th, 2024.

The 2024 Fall NEAR-Fest XXXVI is scheduled for October 11th and 12th as usual, and subsequent Spring and Fall NEAR-FXest events will be back on the Friday-Saturday schedule. More information is available on the NEAR-Fest website at www.near-fest.com

SMART24 Date Set

The Symposium for Amateur Radio Technology in Springhill, Nova Scotia, 2024 edition, will take place on Saturday, May 4th at the usual place, the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre (Springhill Community Centre). The Symposium will feature several classroom sessions on all aspects of amateur radio, and will also include a flea market and a lunch. Look for more information to come out in the coming weeks as the website gets built. Jim Langille at the Maritime Amateur reports that the entry fee will be rising to \$20, and a flea market table will be \$20 also.

RAC Exam Standards Committee

On Wednesday 31 January 2024 the RAC Exam Standards Committee delivered its recommendations on the entire Basic Amateur question bank to ISED Canada, our regulator. While all of the same general topics are still being addressed, the Committee has recommended sweeping changes to the bank. The goal of the Committee was to remove confusion, awkward wording, repetitive questions, and those not conforming to the standards adopted by the Committee as guidance, on the recommendation of Dave Newcombe, VE3WI. Dave ran, for many years, the training and evaluation program for Ontario's nuclear power generating stations. He is an expert in exam standards and composition.

In all, the Committee submitted a total of 982 questions to replace the existing bank. These questions were fully translated so the English and French versions are the same. Only 169 questions have no changes at all. The other 83% of the questions underwent some degree of change, from minor to major. Some new questions were created, and some old questions were dropped. The "Partial Answer" (complete the sentence) questions were reduced from 338 to 131. A large portion, 851 of the 982 questions, are now interrogative - where a question is asked and the candidate selects the best answer. All 76 statement type (fill-in-the-blank) questions in the existing exam have been removed as they fell below the Committee's adopted standard. There are also no double-negative or other grammatically challenging questions that survived.

With its new bank, the Committee also submitted draft block diagrams and formulas to ISED with the request that they be provided to candidates before writing an exam. The diagrams and formulas are not identified, but the Committee believes they will still help candidates demonstrate their knowledge, beyond simple memorization.

The Exam Standards Committee is chaired by RAC Regulatory Affairs officer Dave Goodwin, VE3KG, and is staffed with over two dozen amateurs - mostly examiners and instructors - from across Canada. Brent Taylor, VY2HF, was the PEI representative on the Committee. Brent teamed up with Rod, VE3ISO on the Antenna and Propagation parts of the exam, and also made contributions to questions from other parts of the bank. François Daigneault, VE2AAY (the creator of Exhaminer and other training programs) played a key role on the Committee for continuity and translation.

RAC's suggested question bank is a recommendation only, and while we fully expect ISED to welcome and implement the report, it is not obligated to accept it as-is, and may make additional changes. As the new bank will take time to install into ISED's test engine, we expect it may be early 2025 before the new question bank is live. ISED is also expected to publish the recommended question bank ahead of time, to get feedback from instructors who were not part of the revision work. RAC hopes that study guide publishers will also be able to see the bank in time to issue new versions of their guides.

The work of the Committee has already started on the Advanced question bank. The Committee's goal is to have its Advanced revisions to ISED by the end of October, 2024.

Meetings and Events Calendar - February

5: 2M Simplex net, at 8:00 P.M. (2000) on 146.550 MHz, hosted by Joel, VY2KW

6: Monthly club meeting

7, 14, 21, 28: Wednesday night 2M net, 7:30 P.M. (1930) on the VE1CRA repeater(s)

1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Thursday night HF nets, on 3727 LSB (+/- QRM) at 7:00 P.M. (2000)

3, 10, 17, 24: Virtual Breakfast 2M nets, 8:00 A.M. (800) on the VE1CRA repeater(s)

Future Events

February 9-11: **Orlando Hamcation** <https://www.hamcation.com/>

February 18-19: **International DX CW contest** <http://www.arrl.org/arri-dx>

March 4-5: **International DX Phone contest** <http://www.arrl.org/arri-dx>

April 8: **Total Solar Eclipse over PEI.** <https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/solar/2024-april-8>

April 18: **World Amateur Radio Day:** <https://www.rac.ca/world-amateur-radio-day/>

April 25-26: **NEAR-Fest** in Deerfield, NH. <https://near-fest.com/>

May 4: **SMART24:** <https://sites.google.com/view/smartwestcumbarc/home>

May 17-19: **Dayton Hamvention** <https://hamvention.org/>

June 22-23: **Field Day**

Help Us Out!

Do you have something you would like to contribute to this newsletter? Drop us an email at secretary@charlottetownarc.com.